POETRY QUARTERLY

SPRING - 1941

HOW POETS' REPUTATIONS ARE MADE
by "Deflator"

JUST BEFORE SPRING
by Samuel J. Looker

NEW POEMS
by Nicholas Moore, Wallace B. Nichols,
E. Curt Peters, Patricia Ledward,
Peter Baker, Bertram Warr and others

REVIEWS and RESULT of COMPETITION

Edited by Wrey Gardiner

GREY WALLS PRESS, BILLERICAY
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POETRY QUARTERLY

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EDITORIAL

WITH this first number of the third volume of POETRY QUARTERLY we again appear to our readers in a new dress. In these days of difficult supply of even the essentials of life the materials for the production of a magazine cannot be obtained at will and choice as in the old and easy days. In spite of this we believe that the present appearance of POETRY QUARTERLY will be recognised as a distinct improvement. Criticism is welcomed, however.

In an article on another page a contributor raises the thorny subject of the apparently inescapable relationship of poetry—the Cinderella of the arts—and poverty. What can be done for the poor poet in the generally complete absence of any monetary return for his labour? As this journal exists only in order to give what help it can to poets and poetry some remarks here may not be out of place. In a recent article in "Kingdom Come" Mr. Lawrence Whistler commented on the modern neglect of poetry and the profound ignorance of most people of contemporary poetic achievement. The number of periodicals which pay for verse contributions is very small and the space they allot to poetry limited to half a page here and there which must be somehow filled. Magazines devoted entirely to poetry are many but their appeal is confined to a limited public, often diminished to the point of extinction by the habit of constantly serving up a few names in a politico-literary clique known to the editor. All such magazines, however, are kept alive by the subscriptions of true lovers of poetry who give this tangible proof of their devotion to our greatest Art. For poetry is the real expression of the English genius. From the

time of the anonymous author of "Sumer is icumen in" there have always been in these islands a handful of people who thought more of the expression of immortal beauty and truth in the language of their generation than of the petty and passing gratifications that can be bought with money. They have generally been rewarded by neglect and contempt of the mob, but their writings have become the very speech of the people and given deep and satisfying pleasure to increasing numbers through the centuries. There is, unfortunately, now-a-days a more sinister aspect of the matter. Another of our contributors explains the difficulties the honest poet who has only the merit of his work to support his claim to attention encounters today. Jobbery and corruption are not confined to politics. They are rife and deep rooted in the contemporary literary scene. The intrigues of Balkan or South American states are clean and clear cut compared with the humbug and rottenness that is now living like a parasite on the noble tradition of English literature. What was once the free expression of the soul of a great nation has become a dirty trade practised by obscure people in vague corners employing the same technique as the exploiters of patent medicines, and with less justification. The pill may purge, but the poem pleases nobody but the minute clique of the author's friends and toadies. The hungry sheep of the greater public are not fed. In Fables For The Female Sex 1744 there is an engraving of the ragged poet writing in his garret. The elegant patron eager to extend his help is entering at the door. We do not have to depend on his assistance today, but we do depend on the subscriptions of our readers or at least payment for the current number of a magazine that has often made it possible for them to publish their work for no other reason than we thought it worth printing. The circulation of POETRY QUARTERLY is increasing, but your continued support will ensure a more brilliant future and more power in our fight for merit against a peculiarly vicious form of monopoly and patronage.

THE GREY WALLS PRESS
ANNOUNCES PUBLICATION IN APRIL OF
"BETWEEN TWO WORLDS"
BY
E. CURT PETERS

HOW POETS' REPUTATIONS ARE MADE

by

"DEFLATOR"

CHARLES Lamb speaks scornfully, in one of his essays of "*things in books' clothing*, perched upon shelves, like false saints usurpers of true shrines." Lamb's scorn is just. Why is it that unworthy poets, who write bad, insincere verse, so often achieve notoriety, while good ones can scarce get a hearing? Why is it that the books of sham pretension are flaunted in the bookshops and are reviewed at length, like any potlatch or tribal feast, when true poetic art is "made tongue-tied by authority?" The truth is that a poetry racket, as real and as well organised as any of old Chicago, is in our midst, and functions with precision and force. The originators of the poetry racket are very far from gangsters in appearance. They may be compared with Maw, the famous character in Bickerstaffe's play *The Hypocrite*, and it must also be remembered that a mawworm would make them a very excellent emblem or heraldic device. But outwardly they are English ladies and gentlemen, with soft voices pitched to the right tone. They are well dressed and well educated at the best schools, and, above all, belong to the most select cliques and coteries. Their favourite proverb is, "everything for a friend." They are past-masters in the arts of back-scratching, log-rolling and literary puffery generally. Their practice includes the science of surgery. They are skilled at all forms of suture. Their seamlike articulation of bad poetry to large circulations is the admiration of all beholders. The thing is not simple in its essence, but complex in all its ramifications. Here is a friend of a bad poet. The problem is how to trundle the poet into Fame's antechamber and turn him from a young aspirant with pegtop trousers into a real pouter pigeon with inflated crop. The friend may be a publisher's reader, who is at one and the same time a reviewer for the Sunday Press and on the advisory staff of one of the book clubs. He will be able to read a manuscript for his firm, review the published book for his paper, and select it for his club. Excellent for the poet and convenient for the critic no doubt who is thrice paid, but awkward from the point of view of genuine, creative, unfriended work. In these circumstances what chance has the independent poet, whatever his merits, of catching the public eye or making his mark in the reviews? None at all. If a poet is unfortunate enough to dislike puffery, and most good poets do, he will soon discover that the poetic climate is extremely arid. If he is strong

enough to continue the struggle he will find the powerful weapon of the boycott used against him. His books will not be reviewed or talked about. No good natured literary Knight will write little puffs for the poet, which may be used at discretion, either on the jacket of his book or in the advertisements of his publisher:—

Brilliant, stimulating, praecocial poetry. This is the most moving book of verse I have ever read.

Full of finely conceived lines . . . . Shows fundamental brain tissue . . . . Stupendous!

Tomkins brings back the age of gold. Not even John Greengage can touch this purgation. This spiritual cleansing of costive poetics.

Responsive to beauty as I am, I literally wept for hours after reading your book. You have definitely dented my mind.

I am certain that every reader of this book will do as I, go to bed at once happy and satisfied.

Further my unfortunate good poet will find no market in the periodicals, run or controlled by the coteries. Thus bereaved of the kind assistance which the bad and pushing poets receive from their friends and adherents, he will be lucky to survive. Certainly he will lack the tonic effect of the cock-tail parties, arranged by those with one eye on the main chance, and the other on the careers of their friends.

One poet known to me who achieved a large sale, and who wrote farinose verse, was the cousin of a well-known publisher, and the nephew of an influential critic, while by a happy chance, his bosom friend was the editor of an evening paper of wide circulation. Further, he had the astonishing good fortune to win the good graces of a charming blonde, chief publicity agent to a large firm of advertising contractors. My acquaintance was in clover. Of course his school and university were right and he belonged to the correct clubs, and was persona grata to the coteries Thus placed, the full orchestra of puffery was enabled to play and the public were impressed, greatly to his delight and benefit. His verse indeed became quite the thing, in spite of the indigestion attaching to its perusal.

This, in brief, is how poets' reputations are sometimes made, even if they go up like a rocket and come down like the stick, when the powder is spent. Not all bad poets are quite so fortunate as this young man. But none-the-less, to paraphrase a famous political formula, "The pushing of poetry, for reasons other than those of merit and desert, has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished."

Plea for Poetry

Let us have done, have done with History,
With forecast, chronicle and retrospect,
For Clio's honesty has fallen suspect;
We will instead invoke her sisters three,
Erato, Thalia, and Calliope,
And wise Urania shall our ways direct;
Whose ardent eyes and thoughtful brows reflect
A deeper measure of sincerity.

And, lest our findings should be deemed uncouth,
He who to our age and his own did speak
Ethics, Poetics, found a seriousness
More high in Poetry and a higher truth;
Deceived by History, in our days of stress
We also to the Poets turn, wise Greek.

SILVIA TATHAM.

Dawn

Not with flame and fanfare
Comes this dawn,
But in soft, pale mist;
And the moon in the western reaches
Breasts a foam of clouds,
Swimming away, away.

The sea is a hushed opal;
The white houses on the hill
Begin glimmering;
Who would think that the night
Had been long terror of bombs
And human evil?

Oh, not with flame and fanfare
Will the dawn of peace
Come: but as this pale, lovely dawn,
Secretly, a welling urge
In our hearts, with the dead moon, war,
Reeling away, away.

WALLACE B. NICHOLS.

The Loveliest Songs

"Les plus beaux vers sont ceux qu'on n'ecrira jamais . . ."

Lying awake,
Curled in the tender shell of night,
I listen to the heart-beat of the world.
Then do the loveliest poems sing
With a soft eternal sound,
Seeping like a limpid spring
From the ground.

Alas——
For they elude the hand
That would arrange
Their essential spontaneity
These fragmentary songs
Engrave the eager mind
As lightly and as faithlessly
As ripples on the sand
Disordered by the wind.

So slumber on
O fragrant-scented songs
Unfolding in the hollow of my soul,
Sleep your deep sleep
And dream your ancient dreams,
For what you are——I am.
You blow me to the pointed flame
Of glorious life and far-flung light.

PATRICIA LEDWARD.

Trees, who are distant as another's reality,
Anguish or joy, invade our famished city.
Armed with your foreign beauty, move through
our streets,
Bringing to taut and shattered structures the sweet
And placid harmonies of artlessly complaining
leaves.
Entice with you a million exiled flowers
And singing birds. Perhaps the grievous hours
Will finish then. Men will sit unclothed in the
grass wonderingly
Listening to the strange melody of poised lilies.

BERTRAM WARR.

Poem 13

I am melancholy
hurt with the folly
of tumbling tears
and fearing flowers.

I am melancholy
like the green holly
and pained with dew
from the morning's blue.

I am melancholy
sad in the evening
and troubled here
with a strange new fear.

I am melancholy
here in the darkness
touched with coldness
of thoughts unspoken.
and a strange new fear.

ERIC NIXON.

Dust is again my Comforter

Dust is again my comforter
and I sleep with the serpent.
Roses are my scourge
and I avoid the garden, shunning the t ees
whose leaves have been absorbed by
the hungry earth.
I drink with the old men, but am not
of them,
for I am asleep and alive, but they
are shadows.

Dust is again my comforter
and I sleep with the serpent;
and I heard the wind say:
"I who have pillaged the leaves will
awaken the serpent."

ROY McFADDEN.

Sonnet in the Dark

(To Priscilla)

Darling, no matter how the shadows fall
Now in our garden, aconite and snowdrop,
We have our peace, two loves between four walls
That no guns' ran-tan-tan can separate.
The bombers come in darkness over the hills.
But we upon our soft and easy pillows
Sleep on beneath the hopeless fires of hate:
We know our own unfailing love too well.
My darling, in the dark I feel you near,
My darling, in the day I speak a prayer,
Wishing in field or wood that you were near,
That I might feel you here beyond all else.
O, my sonnet in the dark, at night we are
More completed than any pointed star.

NICHOLAS MOORE.

Poem

The delight ends in roses, and in a bud,
The budding stars surround the glassy moon
My day is splashed with roses and with blood.

I cannot see myself now in your glass,
the days will rake the lacerated mind:
and summer sunlight breaks the twisting grass.

I cannot think too long for memories sing
and flash up in the mind like country-crossing pylons.
And I, as a boy hard-tripped, am flung head-long.

The exploding love batters the aching brains
and you are framed in music like a song;
I listen to hear the folk-tune once again.

Soon the days with heavy leaves will pass
with you far-off, for ever gone, distance will heal
but your voice will not fade like summer grass.

REGINALD C. JOLLY.

The Cross-Roads

If this is the end,
Mankind's death agonies,
The guns the cracking of an old man's
knees;
if the gods intend
that these blood-symphonies
Shall be man's final melodies;
then swiftly let it end.
But if a new world waken,
if in death's despair,
forgotten and forsaken,
we see the dawnlight glare,
Then we shall withstand
The pain-wracked robe of care
Then shall we bear
the touch of death's dead hand,
stroke Medusa's hair,
rejoice that we are there
at the first proemial birth—songs of
a life where man may live
fearless in the freedom and the plenty
earth can give.

PETER BAKER.

Fire No Desire

Now in the dark and haunted cave of time
The already dead droop round the dying lamp;
I will make heard my reed note in the snow,
The frozen hand still tapping at the pane.

In this harsh spring desire dies,
Or like the soiled crocus in the mud
Hides beneath the brittle elms,
And no roads lead to summer and the sea.

We wait and wildly yield to a wilder song
Stark in the winds that bring the bitter month,
April in whose sharp fires our world shall burn,
Gone with old loves, old habits, ashes in the rain.

WREY GARDINER.

Ilkley Moor 1941

There is no passion now. The earth
is like a woman after Love
and seeks deep sleep. The sap has run,
the fruits are plucked—now for rest.

The gold glow of the sun on the
gold glow of the moor is the sparkle
of her maiden hair, the curves of
the moor the curves of her legs as
they stretch in lazy rest, the mists
in the morning the smoke of her
breath, the white jewels and daggers
of frost gifts her lovers bring to
her whilst she lies, thus lovely, in sleep.

About her the dark grouse gibber,
like old men who have forgotten speech,
the sheep wander, mazed with day,
blinded with night, chewing hard stubble,
whilst the clouds watch over her like
dark nuns, clothing her in virgin
white, chilled snows of sanctity,
washing her with the tears of heaven.

As she sleeps the sun watches, for she
has not escaped. She who has
loved is always the prey of
love, and she cannot sleep forever.

A. E. EDWARDS.

From Waterloo Bridge

The river scene was an ink and wash drawing.
Across the ink-blue sky low wheeling,
The gulls were ice white,
Whiter than the most light
Rifts of sky.

A thing whiter than sky, as gulls on rain-cloud,
Makes through my heart a twang of feeling,
A sudden expand—
Sun striking low in Saint-Mary-le-Strand,
Or snow falling.

SARA BRYAN.

Seagulls

Cool, white, down-drifting, wings spread.
Light as snow flakes tossed upon the air,
fall, fall.
Wheeling, dipping, poised as a ballet dancer
awaits applause.
Lost soul sea cry, call, call.

To the green and gold flecked sea do you belong,
With it's lilting, laughing drops that fall in
spray,
Not to angry, churning waves that beat in
monotonous undertone.
Not to this ice-bound world so grey.

These present sombre themes, dull, listless, mute;
The sea-bird call, a mournful dirge of fate,
Our eyes are blind to beauty in the outspread
wings—
While voices sing their hymn of hate.

NAN ELLIS.

Snowflakes

Down
And round
About they twirl,
Each pirouetting
In dip and swirl.
On flaky toes
Each little plume
A-dancing goes,
With skirts outspread
Each sinks at last
Down to the ground
With bended head,
And there it lies,
Its dancing done,
For another moon
And another sun.

D. R. W. CARR.

Impressions of a Day

This is the gate between two hills
With icy clouds blown back, gold tipped
Against the blue shadows of the morning.
This is the gate through which we pass each
day,
Fingers numbed and faces stiff with yawning.
The valley between the hills, mist filled and
wet
Curling its cloudy vapours round brown leaves;
Yet the road with stony eyes
Runs straight in the early morning.

Time ticks by loud mouthed and shrill
Into that noisy stratum of machinery.
Colossus implanted with a vulgar grin
Leans his back against the gale,
Keenly appreciative of the din,
Proud muscles swelling beneath thick skin;
One mighty hand upon the rail
Of destiny.
I knew,
He could not see, did not believe in you—or
me.
Do you believe in me, or I in you
When we are not together
Do I believe in you?

Comes the night—Searchlights patterned
overhead
Long chinks in the black-out curtain of the
night.
A roofless house gapes wonderingly, beneath
The swift clear panorama of the sky
Watching the stars, like lanterns on the dark
heath
Of this our Universe, no, not really ours,
The world perhaps, the land, the sea, but not
the sky,
Not though we conquer it, and fly.

MARY EMMETT.

April Rhapsody

Behold the wonder of the spring-frocked hills,
Where emerald powder thickens on the
larch,
And regiments of jonquils proudly march
To the frilled trumpeting of daffodils
Nodding unwarlike heads to the mob grass!
Pale dog-violets shyly plight their troth
Where May shall spread her sky-blue, scented
cloth
Of hyacinth, and tremble as we pass
For fear the unobservant boot should crush
Their miniature perfection at a tread.
Look, the mock-current bush is flecked with
red,
And primrose clusters stud the coppice brush!
Sun prises open fisted leaf and petal:
Skyward the lark soars, singing, out of sight,
While children shout in frenzy of delight
To find first cowslips' freshly-minted metal!

E. CURT PETERS.

The Lost Dryad

The fairest tree in the forest land was
mine
And as it grew in beauty
I, its soul invisible, so clothed,
Made myself felt in living human souls.
The tree has fallen,
Now I wander,
Lost!

Homeless now, I ever haunt the weald
While I myself am haunted
By a song too sad for singing.

AIDAN CLARKE.

The Lupin Garden

The mower is silent now, the Cheshire fields,
Cool, dark and silent, waiting for the moon,
Lie pressed about my garden, and each hedgerow yields
A multitude of stars; I saw at noon
The petals droop, but now they glimmering lie
Deep in the darkening shadows by the gate;
Here in my lupin garden colours die.
Should one remember war, in summer, when the hour is late?

The sleeping chestnuts stir, the young owls cry,
Beyond the wood I hear the river flow,
Slipping through England past the City's high
Dark spires and country gardens where the roses glow,
Dimly alight before the clear June stars; I hear
A cart pass on the road; the sky is darker blue,
A bird-call in the hedge is sudden, clear.
Should one remember war, in twilight, when the moon is new?

Above my lupin garden when the hour is late
I hear the planes, high-flying from the hills
Of Wales, and then, alert and quivering, I wait
For that dull thunder, endless noise that stills
The little country sounds, the bat's thin cry,
The stir of woodlands, restless in the night,
I hear the guns, I see the flaming sky;
Can one forget the war, in summer, when the stars are bright?

MABEL E. ALLEN

To a Spider

Why have I such a ghastly dread of you,
You scurrying scrap who would not deign to spare
A single moment of your busy life to stare
At one, whose clumsy hands and mind
Can ne'er achieve, nor understand, the fragile artistry you wind
Into the gay festoons you deftly trace
Across the Autumn hedgerows like some priceless lace.

ELIZABETH BAXTER

Madrigal

God made the boundless heavens, then He
sought
To lighten darkness over sea and land,
And so, with skill divine and master hand,
Three glowing suns He wrought.

And now one takes its way across the skies,
The other twain, oh! shrinking flower of mine,
For me the light of all my life will shine,
Those other suns, thine eyes!

From the Portuguese of Eugenio de Castro

translated by HENRY S. MILLER.

Gulf

He was the Night, she was the Day,
Each to the other drawn,
But ever between their hunger lay
The dusk and early dawn.

GLADYS FINDLAY.

Caprice

False, vain, capricious
Yet you are beautiful,
With eyes half-closed,
Dreaming of hid delights,
Your face alight and glowing,
Red lips and nails,
And dusky hair,
A light self-conscious voice,
A supple clinging dress;
False, vain, capricious,
Yet you are beautiful.

SAMUEL J. LOOKER.

I pray you, teach me how to Love

I pray you teach me how to love,
and take my angry heart in store
for I have never loved before.

I pray you, teach me kindliness,
yet you must learn to bear with me
for I was blind and could not see.

I pray you, teach me how to live,
and strongly hold me to your heart
against the time when I depart.

ERIC WRIGHT

At Pegwell

Here where the silver Stour winds,
A shining ribbon thro' the sand,
I come to watch at dawn of day,
The circling gulls above the bay.

Where the white cliffs are crowned
with green.
I love to lie in noonday heat,
And watch the little crested waves,
Creeping towards the hidden caves.

At sunset, when the rosy clouds
Are tipped with evenings' golden glow,
I see the glory of the sky,
And brown-sailed barges passing by.

One could not know, and yet not love,
The changing beauties of the bay,
In all its opalescent hues
Of fairy greens, and pinks, and blues.

And in the silence of the night,
The crescent moon sails overhead,
And breezes rustle thro' the trees,
Making faint music 'mongst the leaves.

I'm homesick for my Western hills,
And wooded slopes, and foaming streams,
Yet here in Kent I've beauty found.
And in my heart 'tis safely bound.

BETTY V. F. ROBINSON *

* Mrs. Robinson, who was one of the earliest subscribers to Poetry Studies, died last year.

Heart of Oak

Come, cheer up, my Lads! 'tis to Glory we steer,
To add something more to this wonderfull Year;
To Honour we call you, not press you like slaves.
For who are so free as we sons of the Waves.

Heart of Oak are our ships,
Heart of Oak are our Men,
We always are ready,
Steady! Boys! steady

We'll fight and we'll conquer again and again
We ne'er see our Foes but we wish them to stay,
They never see us but they wish us away;
If they run, why we follow and run them ashore,
For if they won't fight us, we cannot do more.

Heart of Oak, &c.

They swear they'll invade us, these terrible Foes;
They'll frighten our Women, our Children, and Beaus;
But shou'd their Flat-Bottoms in Darkness get o'er,
Still Britons they'll find to receive them on Shore.

Heart of Oak, &c.

We'll still make them run, and we'll still make them sweat,
In spite of the Devil and Brussels Gazette,
Then cheer up, my Lads, with one Heart let us sing,
Our soldiers, our Sailors, our Statesmen, and King.

Heart of Oak, &c.

DAVID GARRICK.

Sung in Harlequin's Invasion, 1759

Time

Medieval tones are out of place;
Dust has soiled the ruff and lace.
Yet with the same old clock and chime
He speaks his smooth familiar rhyme
Through twisted lips and stranger's face.

R. H. SLANEY

JUST BEFORE SPRING

by

SAMUEL J. LOOKER

SLOWLY, a little nearer every day, the Spring returns to the countryside. Even in these late February, or early March days, shortly before dusk, the storm cock calls lustily from the poplars. I welcome his clear glad notes as a harbinger of the fuller bird chorus soon to come, of which the first sweet garrulity is already heard just before the morning light is breaking. Skies are brighter now, with a tumultous, but alluring flurry of cloud, and the feeling of deepening winter has gone from the air.

All is expectancy and hope. Snowdrops, most modest of flowers, delight the eye everywhere. In the South, in sheltered spots, primroses are to be seen. Hedges are ready to leap into a green flame almost overnight. The sticky buds of the chestnut seem waiting for the first mild days, to open to the sun. Now I delight to walk in the high woods, where the trees, tall and straight, reach up to the light. I watch with the utmost pleasure, the glimpses of the sky between the bare branches, and note, with the joy of a pure poetry, the twigs, etched in charcoal against the keen sharp air of winter. There are no birds in the deserted wood, and the only sounds to be heard are the creaking of the boughs moved by the wind, and the music of running water, as the little stream sings on its way through the middle of the wood. I do not heed the sodden ground, or the squelching of the dead leaves under my feet, for I am enchanted by the beauty all around me, and cannot cease to admire the lovely contours of the eager trees waiting for spring.

Leaving the woods, I walk over the uplands, and notice with appreciation the furrowed fields. Fields that I am told, have not been ploughed within living memory; now, under the stress of war, are returned to their primal use. Their brown acres stretch away to the horizon. I love the smell of ploughed wet earth and the sight of the bright drops trembling on the twigs of the low hedgerows. For these things bring back the sharply felt, innocent memories of my boyhood, when I first awoke to the glad days before spring and every breath I drew was a delight.

Within recent weeks, two friends, a man and a woman, have told me that they dislike the spring and love the autumn. Because, as they both say, the English spring is too variable and, after a day or two of warmth, so often plunges back into the wintry days.

I do not agree with them. To me the variability of the English climate—although trying to the garden at times—is one of its chief charms. I loathe an ever-lasting blue sky and day after day of continuous, blinding, broiling sunshine, when all energy seems drained away by the heat, and one merely wishes to laze and doze. Weather in short, which is only fit for lizards. Give me mixed days of sunshine, rain and wind; a few days of bright warmth, with blue skies, then the wind and more varied tints, with a tang in the air that makes the blood dance faster, followed perhaps, by some soft warm rain to refresh the earth.

I love the colours of autumn, and I am deeply moved by its astonishing beauty, but always, in the thought of the dying year, comes a touch of melancholy and regret. Whereas, in the days before spring, and more so, when spring is actually here, is hope and joy without a single thought of melancholy. Surely growth and lustihood, at the beginning of the year, are more to be desired than waning and decay—however lovely in form and colour—at its close? Those who say they prefer the autumn must have forgotten the flowers of spring. Then the hedgerows and the meadows are alive with sweetness, and who can describe the delight of the unfolding of the first rose? On reflection I believe the professed superior love of autumn to be a literary pose and one not rooted in spontaneous feeling! My whole attitude towards Nature is one of acceptance, not of revolt. I do not believe in the Pathetic Fallacy, that is, the belief that Nature mirrors our joys and is sad with our sorrow. Men read their own moods into her inscrutable mind, but she is, in reality, neither *Natura Benigna* nor *Natura Maligna,* and, like the gods, measures out to us, "ever like for like, by their great memories the gods are known." Nature shows a shining face even though the heart be breaking, and when the heart is uplifted with joy, she is quite likely to be overcast or full of menace. Nature, in short, is indifferent—but not hostile—to the petty hopes and fears of men. She has indeed, her own great and recurring work to attend to, and that, to her, is all sufficing. She exists by her own right in power and in beauty. Therefore I would not impose my own thoughts and desires upon Nature, or strive to read in the starry sky the secrets I yearn to know. I would love her for herself alone, as one loves a woman, a child or a flower. The true lover seeks his own, and is content in his love. So in these days of preparation and forewarning, so bounteous of beauty and hope. I quietly wait with the old thrill moving my mind, for the putting forth of the green leaves and unfolding of the first spring flowers.

A WORD FOR POOR POETS.

May I say a word for poor poets—I mean poets who have no worldly wealth. It is as hard for a poor poet to live spaciously in the kingdom of Poetry as it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Wealthy men have been poets,—but not because they were wealthy Poor men have been poets; most poets have been poor men; and often because their very real gifts shut them out of the general scramble for a sufficient wage. The world at large which values all things in terms of money. cannot bring itself to believe in the validity of gifts which produce no monetary return. Poetic fire has to be its own reward.

Not only is it too readily assumed that a poet should be poor, that he should live in a garret. that he must be (I speak as a worldling) a failure; it is assumed—this is the astonishing fact—that a poet loves his garret, worships the Lady Poverty, and is proud of financial failure.

The world needs Poetry to-day as it never needed it before. The way to supply that need is, first, to help all poets.

I have no desire to see Poetry added to the list of fine things commercialised and used for profit-making purposes by that base part of the world which always misses the artist's point.

Money-making is admissible only so far as it enables the artist to be himself,—free to make beautiful things. The world which wastes both thought and money on worthless pursuits and objects might well spend more on artists and artistry.

It often happens that indirect payment is the fair and practical way. For instance, a cultured business man might find part-time work for a poet or two—work which would not crush the poet in the man and which would give him a certain income and the freedom he needs.

Another point worth consideration is this: The present state of the world proclaims the spiritual bankruptcy of large-scale organisation. I see hope, rather, in the system of groups—groups of people who care deeply *for the thing itself* working quietly in friendly association.

Poetry magazines might work in some degree of association and certainly not in any species of rivalry. They could help poets and poetry-lovers to form effective influential groups. The right people would know one another more and more. An ideal book of reference for poets and their friends might be arrived at, providing information about all aspects of publicity, payment and opportunities at home and abroad.

A certain amount of missionary work might be started—highly necessary work. The public for poetry is small because the larger public doesn't know what it misses by ignoring "one of England's greatest heritages," the glory of its poetry. The larger public gets little opportunity of becoming acquainted with the best poetry written now It does not see the Poetry magazines and very little genuine poetry appears in the popular newspapers and magazines. Keen spirits might persuade the Editors of popular publications to find more space for poetry, thus stimulating the demand for the best.

The world needs Poetry, the Poet stands for the basic principles of the good life—freedom, equality (equality of opportunity) fraternity, peace and good will. Where he is ignored or despised, the good life is despised and the wickedness of war in all its forms will continue.

AIDAN CLARKE.

REVIEWS

Death at Sea, Poems by Frederic Prokosch.
Chatto and Windus 6s.

The Mind of Man, by John Gawsworth.
Richards Press, 1s.

"LET the world go its way, and the kings and the peoples strive, and the priests and philosophers wrangle; at least to make a perfect verse is to be out of time, master of all change, and free of every creed." So Gautier thought, and many others before or since. Yet this is not a view which can be maintained with any success while total warfare runs its course. Poets whose work remains quite untouched by any fear or feeling by reason of their love of artistry, and are unconscious of "the threatening shadow in the jungle grass," will hardly be able to move the minds of their contemporaries. The poetry in short, of these world-escapers bears an unreal look, and seems a mere toy, the result of a trick of style. Therefore, all poets worth the name to-day are concerned with, and immersed in, the great events of their period. That is not to say for a moment that they have to become adjuncts of the Ministry of Information and mere propagandists. It does mean that to them, as to Shelley before them, the miseries of the world *are* miseries and will not let them rest.

The two poets under consideration here, Frederic Prokosch and John Gawsworth, are both fully conscious of "the threatening shadow." They are both vital and alert. They are living minds, who evoke out of terror and pity, murder and sudden death, the loveliness of immortal art, until we, their audience, are ourselves touched with part of their fire, and "stir in the darkened theatre where the final act is played."

Good writing implies awareness of the conditions of social life, a degree of constant movement in both art and criticism, which itself changes with its period. Life in its myriad shapes demands such awareness if the artist is not to fail entirely, or fall into a parochial rut. In a word, poetry must deal with living tissue, not dead matter. Thus the poems in *Death at Sea*, have a high and solemn music, which is profoundly moving, because they are built up on the motif of human suffering and "man's inhumanity to man. This is the recurring theme of vital poetry to-day, and when, as in the case of Frederic Prokosch, this emotionally true attitude, is united to great artistic sensibility and brilliant technique, the result is great and enduring poetry.

Prokosch's imagery is stark at times, but not forced or ugly :

> Shadow upon shadow, the shadow of love
> Fell on the naked sleeper at my side.
> A blue vein trembled and the midnight sighed.
> "This," I thought, "is all I shall ever have.
>
> After this, nothing." And the wild thought drove
> All other thoughts out of my midnight brain.
> "Nothing." The midnight ivy sang in the rain.
> "Nothing but bone; nothing but rock; core; cave."
>
> Women stood on a cliff far, far away
> Praying the dead and dying; a waterfall
> Rang in old Africa; and as the day
> Gathered, I rose. Far down the pillared hall
> Sobbing I found that other room where love
> Lay waiting, even now, to comfort and forgive.

He is never wantonly obscure but any obscurity in his verse springs out of the natural difficulties of his subtle and brooding mind, biting upon the hard realities of a confused and involved text. In any case, this difficulty is very occasional, for, as a rule, his poetry shines with colour and light to a marked degree.

Prokosch is a modernist, although he is sufficiently master of his instrument to achieve his effects without a "shout." He clearly shows that in order to be impressive, it is not necessary to behave in Letters either like a boor or a blackguard. Strangely enough, he does not even attack Milton, or lose his verbs in a desperate effort to be original, nor does he pepper his verse with quotations from his miscellaneous reading. Yet he remains intensely individual and aware, essentially modern in tone and pitch, and above all, satisfying in utterance. How does he accomplish this difficult thing? Merely because his wise and careful choice of language has a truly creative mind behind it, of an unusual and penetrating sort.

Shakespeare, in one of the most original of all his observations on love, wrote "This is the monstruosity in love, Lady—that the will is infinite, that the desire is boundless and the act a slave to limit." The thought might be applied to the poet, who must give his whole heart to that which seems immortal. Yet in truth he lives under the shadow of death, a life of limitation fancied to be limitless. Hence springs the melancholy, the nostalgia, which haunts great poetry in all ages. I find this spirit manifest in both Prokosch and Gawsworth. *The Mind of Man* is a small book of only thirty pages and thirty-four poems, yet it is a greater achievment in actual thought and artistry, than pretentious collections under more notorious names. There is quality here. Gawsworth has the lyrical cry, but no softness of mood, for he also possesses a latent force and a power in the use of the sardonic which will leap out and challenge the mind. His only weakness he shares with other lyrical poets, from the days of the author of "Go, lovely Rose," down to our own time, their tendency to spoil a powerful beginning with a weak ending. Gawsworth will sometimes write two excellent stanzas, followed by a poor third. However, several of the lyrics in this short collection, and in particular, *Adolescence*, *The Difference, and Confession of Juan*, are free from this fault and felicitous throughout.

John Gawsworth is a poet, who, still young, can show a fine record of ungrudging service for poetry. Service which many men twice his age, with inflated reputations, may well envy. His poem *Suppliant*, forced out of him by the blood and tears of the war, is no bravura gesture, but literally true. I read the man in every line of it.

I have no bread to eat,
Yet still words warm me.
I stagger down Art's street,
And Life can't harm me.

O I have Love, and fear
No breathing thing.
Though pieced by hunger's spear
Still I would sing.

Such devotion to poetry under dark skies warms the heart. The late Lascelles Abercrombie, reviewing a volume of John Gawsworth's poems a year or so ago, wrote.

"John Gawsworth's poetry *is* poetry—what poetry has always been (and always will be)—simply because he knows how to be entirely himself in it. There is real, firm, shapely and self-subsisting beauty in what he writes."

After reading and re-reading *The Mind of Man*, I say amen to that. So pure and disinterested a poet deserves success. It is to be hoped, even in these hard days of war, that he will achieve it.

SAMUEL J. LOOKER.

Resurgam Younger Poets, Number Three, "Yet A Little Onwards," by Bertram Warr. 1/-.

Number Four, "Song in Storm," by Douglas Gibson. 1/-.

Water Mist, by Frances Paul, Favil Press 4/6.

UP to date Mr. Bertram Warr is the best poet thrown up by this interesting series. There is no slack and slipshod language here, but a verbal efficiency which is not the slick facility of too many so called modern poets, but a sureness of touch without which no poem can live in the mind. There are so many good things in this broadsheet that it is impossible to quote any single line. One would want to give the whole poem, and that means that technically Mr. Warr brings it off, except when he essays pure Hopkins as in "The End of the World" which won't do. "Working Class" in spite of its silly title is an outstanding poem and should find its way into the anthologies. After a spate of poetry made with words but no meaning "Yet a Little Onwards" is refreshing reading. In his introduction he says "No wars, no universal upheavals must be allowed to drive out the fineness that is in man." We agree and echo that none of these things must silence Mr. Warr.

The introductions with which the poets preface their work always make interesting reading, all the more so in these days when the gutter press lathers us with a deluge of apoplectic unreality. Mr. Gibson begins well. "The world, whether it realises it or not, needs poetry." When will it realise it? The poems are more traditional in manner though there are modern enough notes as in "Air Raid Warning"

> The gusty laughter in the street
> Is switched off like a broken tune

"Insensibility" has feeling and music, and leaves in the mind a sense of finality, a restful certainty that accompanies the true poet and for which no amount of spluttering and word splashing can compensate. His rhymes—most of the poems are rhymed—though ordinary enough yet fall naturally and deftly into place as the meaning requires and are not there because the form necessitates their presence.

> The secret dream of mankind curled
> In this dark winter of the world.

His endings and last lines, that bane of the inferior poet, are good too, poised and correct as in "Danseuse Sur La Scène." The title poem "Song in Storm" appeared in this journal, the black bird's song that we have lately heard.

> Which pain and sorrow cannot kill;
> In a chaotic world, his voice
> Can triumph over storm, and still
> Beneath a darkened sky rejoice.

In the best of Miss Paul's poems there is a certain sculptural purity of outline which gives them a detached air as of a fresco seen in the pale light falling from the dome of an Italian church. Their pictorial quality is indeed very marked although occasionally as in "The Mystery" it tends towards the oleographic; but they often achieve the etched precision of a picture reflected delicately on the surface of a pond or pool. Her use of the free verse form in which one word is made to do duty for a line savours rather much of the twenties of H.D. and American poetry of the thinner variety, and is too facile for these times which will perhaps in later years come to be known as "the fighting forties." There is, however a wistful and restrained music in "Water Mist" which makes the title of the book well chosen. Some poets who think that a raucous profusion of ill chosen words is a sign of modernity would do well to imitate it.

WREY GARDINER.

COMPETITION RESULT

No word has come from America concerning the Twenty Dollar Award so the first prize for the best poem appearing in POETRY QUARTERLY during 1940 will be One Guinea originally offered by The Grey Walls Press in the case of the non-materialisation of the American offer. The second prize is a year's subscription to the magazine, and books will be sent to those tying for third place. Here is Mr. Samuel J. Looker's adjudication:—

My choice for the first prize is the untitled poem "Set on the autumn head" by Alexander Comfort which appeared in the Autumn issue. It has a felicity of conception, thought and expression much above the ordinary. The second place goes to Leonard Clark for "The Cottage" in the Spring number which possesses atmosphere and charm, while three poems tie for third prize, "Poetry" by Catherine B. Toosey, "Butterfly Ballet" by Kathleen M. Hughes, and "Thallatta" by F. H. King in that order. "Poetry" has an originality which makes a vivid impact on the mind. "Butterfly Ballet" is most successful in conveying a subtle and restrained music which pleases, and "Thallatta" obtains a place because of a certain sculptural quality and finality of effect in spite of the repetition of 'Nothingness,' which is not only used twice but is spelt with a capital and is an ugly and clumsy word in itself. The following deserve mention:—"Sonnet" by Nicholas Moore, "Adrift" by John Lepper, "The Beeches" by E. Curt Peters, "Without Eyes" by E. W. Nixon, "Listening to Distant Guns" by Denise Levertoff, "Just To—," by E. R. Vere Hodge, "The Wood" by A. W. Barton, and "Dorset—Wartime" by R. D. Birch.

In the Next Issue

SELECTIONS FROM THE NOTE-BOOKS
of
RICHARD JEFFERIES
hitherto entirely unpublished, and his only poem
and
THE RAVEN OF MORTE, by Henry Williamson.

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